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Invigorating professionalism and morale of the public service in Africa

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Summary

With 2015 looming ahead, there is much discussion and analysis centred on the progress made in respect of the Millennium Development Goals, and on the post-2015 agenda. The Goals have been largely viewed as a success, but there is acknowledgment that the achievements have been uneven, especially in Africa, and many lessons can be drawn from the experience of the past decade as the global partnership for sustainable development prepares for its next chapter. It is expected to be a challenging period with high demands, taking place in a very different context from that of a decade ago when the Goals were established.

In Africa, the public service is seen as the engine room for the implementation of developmental goals and objectives. Governments will deliver on the sustainable development agenda through their public services and public service personnel. The resilience of Africa's public services and the profile of its public servants can be viewed through the lens of the various reforms implemented. It can be argued that the public service in the post-colonial era had pride of place and that the waves of continuous and constant reform have had an impact on it. Thus, as public services come to grips with the approach of 2015, the discussion has already moved to the post-2015 agenda. What is the capacity readiness of these public services to respond to a post-2015 agenda and, in particular, what is the mindset of the public servant to respond to the kind of approach and delivery required for a successful sustainable development agenda?

The Goals provided a compelling vision, and there is no doubt that the post-2015 agenda will do likewise. However, delivery on the vision requires invigorated and motivated public servants. It also poses some questions: Is sufficient attention being given to the change management processes and culture that need to be created to foster the type of public service necessary for the new journey and the type of public servant required to respond to the new challenge? Of greater importance, it raises questions as to how public services can build the public service leadership, capacity and morale to respond to the new challenges that the sustainable development agenda will usher in.

The thrust of the present paper is therefore to offer commentary on the impact of reform on the public service and on public servants, who are the stewards for delivery on the development goals, especially in developing countries in Africa. It also provides commentary on the challenges and issues such reform has wrought on the professionalism of the public service. Furthermore, it draws upon lessons learned from the reform periods and the Goals to explore whether public servants have the requisite ethos, behavioural patterns and motivation to successfully deliver on the sustainable development agenda.

I. Introduction

1. As the 2015 end date approaches, policymakers have turned their attention to what will replace the Millennium Development Goals. Given the past experience with the Goals, the new framework will play a critical and defining role in framing both national and global policies for the next decade and beyond. Global actors, especially State actors, are required to accelerate and finish the work of the Goals and at the same time gear up for the post-2015 agenda, as the global partnership for sustainable development prepares for its next chapter, in a more complex world than a decade ago.

2. In Africa, the public service is seen as the engine room for the implementation of developmental goals and objectives. Hence, Governments will deliver on the sustainable development agenda, through their public services and public service personnel. Governments are structurally and constitutionally tied to the civil service, irrespective of the system of government.[1] Public servants, as the stewards for delivery on the development goals, especially in developing countries in Africa, must have a solid values-based culture and the ability to support those for whom the reform is meant. It has been argued that public sector reform in Africa has not been inclusive of all citizens, and yet the reform is meant to improve their standard of living.[2] It has also been pointed out that Uganda's success can be attributed to being able to educate the public on the necessity of reform.[3] Nurturing and motivating such a resource, namely, public servants, is integral to delivery and success. The public service culture must be based on strong universal values: public trust, impartiality, equity, transparency, ethical standards and selflessness.[4] The expression of those values, however, must be within the context of good governance and rule of law and must be guided by strong leadership. The absence of this — and a public service detached from its citizens[2] — can only result in delaying the achievement of the Goals and successful delivery on the post-2015 agenda.

3. The present paper first looks at the impact of reform on the public service, especially in Africa, the challenges and issues it has wrought on the professionalism of the public service and the extent to which it may have had an impact on the ethical values of public servants. Second, it draws from lessons learned during the reform periods and from the experience with the Goals to understand what will contribute to a better ethos and a positive culture and morale among public servants for sustainable development in Africa.

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[1] A. A. Olagboye, *Inside the Nigerian Civil Service* (Ibadan, Nigeria, Daily Graphics, Limited, 2005).

[2] J. Fatile and K. Adejuwon, "Public sector reform in Africa: issues, lessons and future directions", *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, vol. 12, No. 8 (2010).

[3] M. Baird, "The global influence of new public management: case studies from Africa", paper presented for Master's Program for Public Administration, Villanova University, 2007.

[4] P. S. Omoyefa, *The Politics of Public Sector Reforms in Africa* (Lesotho, National University of Lesotho, 2008).

II. Preparing for a post-2015 development era

> Policy learning is a prerequisite ... so that new policies can be really rooted in the African countries.[5]

4. A public service that performs well and whose public servants share a high ethic of professionalism is a prerequisite for more rapid progress on Africa's sustainable and human development goals. However, after decades of public service reform across African nation States, some argue that corruption is a hindrance to Africa's Millennium Development Goals.[6] It is therefore apt to reflect on public sector reform across the continent since it offers some insight into designing the essential institutional and individual characteristics of public service, in general, and public servants, in particular. There is a realization by some that public sector reform has been approached in the past in the wrong way.[4] In the spirit of reflective policy design, some of the lessons learned regarding such reforms in Africa may be appropriate for the design of a new African public sector reform agenda, one that would be aligned with the demands of current global and continental realities.

A. Lessons learned from public sector reform

5. Prior to the advent of the Goals, Africa's public services had been subjected to a series of reforms, with varied success and many painful lessons. The reforms essentially aimed at building an efficient and effective public service that would deliver quality services to its citizens. However, despite the many public sector reforms ushered in, there was limited focus on organizational culture and change, except for the underlying assumptions that if certain policies (for example, efforts regarding recruitment, improving remuneration, career progression and promotion opportunities) were introduced the desired behaviour would conform accordingly. In other words, the reforms would automatically shape a professional public servant, with an ethos for always doing the right thing.

6. Furthermore, the impact of the pace of the reform, the expectations from the reform efforts and the time it would take was not fully appreciated. Fundamental transformation and change processes take a long time, in particular when dealing with the complexities of a public service system. Through the reforms, public services in Africa have been trying to achieve in the space of a few decades (19 years, for example, in the case of South Africa) what had taken hundreds of years to achieve in developed countries.[2] Post-1980 reforms were mainly in the form of structural adjustment programmes, and were largely externally driven, focusing on cost reduction and containment measures.[2] In addition, as African commentators such as Joseph Ayee have pointed out, in respect of the spate of African public sector reform phases, there seems to be general consensus in both consultant reports and the academic literature that the results or achievements of the reforms have been extremely limited in Africa, even negative in some instances.[5] Some lay the blame for

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[5] J. Ayee, "Public sector management in Africa, Economic Research Working Paper Series No. 82 (Legon, Ghana, University of Ghana, November 2005).

[6] See www.sabc.co.za/news/a/1d52090041b3d466a3cbb7f256fa181e/Corruption-seen-as-hindrance-to-MDGs-in-Africa.

this on the technocratic approach taken by donors,[7] where public service reform was seen as an engineering-related problem to be addressed through textbook solutions.

7. Some donors may also have indicated that the Government could be seen as creating wealth-like, profit-making organizations.[4] Such approaches have given no attention to cultural adjustment policies regarding the management of human resources except for reducing the number of public servants.[8] While professionalism in the public services of developed countries has been strengthened by their long and strong democracies, the post-colonial era public service that enjoyed a pride of place, as the engine of society and the major provider of various services to the populace, has been receding.

8. While the role of the State and public services during the period 1950-1970 was recognized, an anti-Statist critique emerged by the 1980s, which questioned the positive contribution of the State on development.[9] The role of State institutions was to come back in vogue in the 1990s. By the 1990s, it had become the norm to reorganize government in the framework of the new public management concept. In South Africa, the new democratic Government set the task of transforming the public administration from one that served the State to one that served a democratic and development State and was interpreted as modernization.[10] The term "new public management" is associated with a minimalist State, with neoliberal ideology and free markets. Ivor Chipkin argues that Geraldine Joslyn Fraser-Moleketi, the former Minister of Public Service and Administration, was at pains to show, unsuccessfully, that the new public management techniques could be separated from their ideological husk.[11] Joseph Jabbra argues that apart from aligning public servants with the private sector language of "managers ... devoid of compassion and care", and "citizenry as clients and customers", the phenomenal rise of corruption in the public service was unprecedented in public administration before new public management.[12]

9. Despite the technical soundness of the reform approach, the programmes and projects have not met the expectations. Moreover, in some post-reform countries, public services may be characterized by a certain lack of financial accountability, probity and discipline, with adverse implications for the effectiveness of regulation, and therefore general efficiency. The African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration, which was adopted by the African Union in 2011, and the Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers' Network, initiated

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[7] World Bank, *Reforming Public Institutions and Strengthening Governance: A World Bank Strategy — November 2000* (Washington, D.C., 2000).

[8] Turkia Ould Daddah, Director-General of the Institute of Administrative Sciences, "Public service in Africa: professionalism", presentation made at the Second Pan-African Conference of Ministers of Civil Service, Rabat, 1998.

[9] M. S. Grindle, "Good governance: the inflation of an idea", Center for International Development Working Paper No. 202 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University, October 2010).

[10] Geraldine Joslyn Fraser-Moleketi, "Public service reform in South Africa: an overview of selected studies from 1994 to 2004", Masters of Administration, School of Public Management and Administration, University of Pretoria, 2006.

[11] Ivor Chipkin, "Design flaws in CIPRO: ambivalence to the new public management in South Africa", *Public Affairs Research Institute Short Essays*, No. 2 (May 2011).

[12] J. Jabbra, President of the Lebanese American University, Lebanon, opening address at the 27th Congress of Administrative Sciences on the theme, "Global competitiveness and public administration: implications for education and training", Abu Dhabi, July 2007.

by human resource managers in the public service in Africa and launched in February 2009, are some of the efforts engaged by Africans to address those problems.

10. Reforms have brought with them some painful lessons, but the experience garnered provides opportunities to strengthen professionalism for sustainable development, some of which are summarized below:

(a) Externally driven agendas have a significant impact on the public service and its public servants;

(b) Transformation and change processes must have a strong focus on those expected to lead the change;

(c) Little attention is given to an evolving African public service culture which is values based. P. S. Omoyefa[4] argues that the main focus of reform must shift from "hardware in the public services" to a values-based culture;

(d) African public services must draw from universal public values, including public trust, impartiality, equity, transparency, ethical standards and selflessness;[4]

(e) The behavioural pattern, the social context, as well as cultural milieu of the people whom the reform is meant for, must be taken into consideration together with the vehicle of the reform;[4]

(f) Values of civil service codes should set out the rights and duties of public servants;

(g) There is a need to institutionalize selfless and purposeful leadership as a forerunner to public reform;[4]

(h) The quality of political leadership should ensure a climate conducive to the development of professionalism in the public service. The essential requirements being the existence of rules within a legal framework and resolute and consistent political will;[8]

(i) Government must harness the public services' most critical resource: its personnel.

11. Hence, while the thrust of public service reform has centred on improvements to the institutional requirements for service delivery, that is, the "hardware", less emphasis has been placed on the agents within those institutions, that is, the public servants, as the very implementers of the reforms. In the 1990s, the concept of governance took prominence over public management. Good governance is associated with a development-oriented administration focused on improving the quality of life of the people and is reflected by "an effective, credible and legitimate administrative system" that is "citizen friendly".[13] This concept saw the rehabilitation of the State as it tried to explain the lack of development in a number of African countries by focusing on the role of institutions.[9]

12. Good governance, as a paradigm for effective public service delivery, resonates strongly across many African public service regimes. However, good governance alone is but an approach to doing something in the right way. In order to effect a behavioural and mindset change among public servants, a concomitant focus

[13] M. Srivastava, "Good governance: concept, meaning and features — a detailed study" (2009).

on rallying support among public servants for "doing the right thing" is required. And, with sustainable human development as the biggest global challenge facing the developing world, the Goals provide a powerful visioning statement to answer the question: "Public sector reforms — to what end?".

B. Lessons from the visioning of a sustainable development agenda

13. In 2000, at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations held in New York, world leaders adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration, committing to a peaceful, prosperous, and just world. The Declaration outlined the Millennium Development Goals, a set of targets for development and poverty reduction to be reached by 2015. As 2015 fast approaches, there is much discussion and debate on the progress made on the eight Goals (extreme poverty eradication, universal primary education, gender equality, child and maternal health, HIV/AIDS reduction, environmental sustainability, and a global partnership for development).

14. The Goals have largely been viewed as a success, but there is acknowledgment that the achievements have been uneven. The *Millennium Development Goals Report 2013: Assessing Progress in Africa Towards the Millennium Development Goals* states that, globally in 2012, 15 of the 20 countries that made the greatest progress on the Goals were from Africa, with countries such as Benin, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Malawi and Rwanda making impressive progress on a number of Goals and targets. For most of the developing countries that have seen growth, there has also been a decline in poverty. That has not been the case across Africa, however, and it is largely acknowledged that, given the current "off-track" status on five of its indicators (exceptions being HIV/AIDS/other diseases, universal primary education and gender equality), Africa may not meet its 2015 commitment to reduce its poverty alleviation goals. The report concludes that it is imperative for countries to continue to learn from one another since "countries with sustained, equitable growth, political stability and human development-oriented policies are doing well in most of the goals".

15. There has been much discourse on the achievements of the Goals. Continuing in the vein of learning from the lessons of public sector reform in Africa, the present paper enters into that discourse — to the extent that it can — by drawing on lessons for improving Africa's public services as they grapple with their development priorities. That will contribute to a better ethos, which will inspire public servants as they brace themselves for the post-2015 agenda. In that regard, some of the key aspects that can be drawn from the Goals include:

(a) They offered a simple, yet compelling vision, serving as an effective communication and advocacy tool;[14]

(b) They spell out the political commitments and require accountability from the political leadership;

(c) Measurement and deadlines support accountability,[14] which, in turn, propel action and provide defined objectives for public servants to work towards;

[14] Global Agenda Council on Benchmarking Progress, "Getting to zero: finishing the job the MDGs started" (2012). Contributors to the paper included Ernest Aryeetey, Daniel Esty, Edwin Feulner, Thierry Geiger, Daniel Kaufman, R. Andreas Kraemer, Marc Levy, John McArthur, Robert Steele, Anand Sudarshan, Andy Sumner and Mark Suzman.

(d) They are focused on outcomes and outputs, which are valuable to the development community,[15] making the impact more real to public servants working closely with their communities;

(e) They shifted policy attention well beyond economic growth objectives, which resonates much better with public servants, especially at the local level, who are at the forefront of service delivery;

(f) They provide a better handle on the capacity of Governments[16] and allow for a discourse that moves beyond just labelling public servants as incompetent and lazy.

16. Making the transition to a post-2015 agenda will not be without its challenges. Challenges persist, many of which were discussed at the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the Sustainable Development Goals held in Addis Ababa in October 2013. Sustainable development goal challenges included funding for implementation, monitoring and evaluation, technical skills and inclusiveness.[17] In the countries of Central Africa, the development of rule of law is high on the agenda, along with lack of governance and weak institutions; the frequency of political crises; and civil-military tensions.[18] The draft report on sustainable development goals for North Africa highlights thematic issues essential for achieving sustainable development: governance, the fight against corruption, rule of law and the efficiency of public action.[19] Addressing such challenges is critical to embracing the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Eradicating poverty is central to sustainable development, requiring "sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth" and efforts aimed at reducing inequalities, promoting gender equality and ensuring access to quality education (A/68/202).

III. Considerations for building a development-oriented, professional African public service

17. The *Millennium Development Goals Report 2013: Assessing Progress in Africa Towards the Millennium Development Goals* states the following:

> With less than 1,000 days until 2015, the impulse of policymakers is to strive for the targets without considering quality, equality and sustainability. The urgency must be tempered by the imperative of sustaining progress beyond 2015. After all, the development process and its challenges and opportunities will persist long after the MDGs have passed.

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[15] T. Moss, "What next for the Millennium Development Goals?", *Global Policy* vol. 1, No. 2 (2010).

[16] G. Cameron, "Statistics for the new agenda", *MDGs and Beyond*, No. 2 (November 2012).

[17] Sithabiso Gandure, "Sustainable development goals: a southern Africa perspective", paper presented at the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on Sustainable Development Goals, Addis Ababa (2013).

[18] Thadée Yossa, "Report on the sustainable development goals: Central Africa sub region", summary prepared for the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on Sustainable Development Goals, Addis Ababa (2013).

[19] A. M. Saleck, "Draft report on sustainable development goals for North Africa: summary", prepared for the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the Sustainable Development Goals, Addis Ababa (2013).

A macroenvironment that embraces good governance and the rule of law is a fundamental prerequisite for progression towards a development-oriented public service, capable of delivering on an African development agenda. At the microlevel, there is a need for key organizational and individual drivers of change for a development-oriented public service.

A. Macrolevel: requirements

1. Good governance and rule of law

18. The ideal of good governance will ensure sustainable development. Bad governance will do the reverse. However, good governance must go beyond just being a useful concept and include the dimensions of a strong political leadership with a will to promote accountability and transparency, and uphold the rule of law. The citizen must be at the heart of the practice of good government, and there must be collaboration with all actors in a society (Government, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and citizens). Under the practice of good governance, public servants must demonstrate flexibility, engage in partnerships and consultations, and promote transparency, which, in turn, inspires confidence and increased productivity and provides protection from corruption; it "requires a capacity for leadership that is based on a continuing reference to a system of moral values ... to an ethic of action and public service that give weight and meaning to the terms of transparency, accountability and responsibility".[8]

19. Rule of law ensures that no single organ of government has the ability to exercise unchecked power, and all are held accountable under the law. It requires that laws are clear, made public, are evenly and justly applied and protect fundamental rights.

20. In general, the concept of good governance and its attendant principles are committed to paper in the form of public policies and are enshrined in constitutions[20] and other regulatory frameworks. They are largely imported from best practices and policies in developed countries and are impressive on paper. However, the implementation record is less impressive, with application inconsistent. Turkia Ould Daddah states that without genuine leadership and without professional public servants, the most carefully elaborated rules would serve no purpose.[8]

2. Freedom from corruption

21. Examples of ineffectual government are often cited in relation to levels of corruption and are also usually aligned to the low confidence the public has in the public administration. It is important to have a highly professional public service that inspires public confidence in its ability to stamp out corrupt practices. Many public services have yet to demonstrate this important attribute by effectively implementing existing frameworks that have been put in place to promote ethical conduct and integrity. A widely used proxy of weak accountability and a lack of transparency are manifested in the problem of corruption.

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[20] M. Hossen, "Problems and possibilities of good governance in Bangladesh: hurdles to achieve sustainable development", *Public Policy and Administration Research*, vol. 1, No. 1 (2011).

22. Macrolevel requirements alone will not be sufficient since these only set the contextual setting within which the public service and public servants should operate. In order to advance and build upon the lessons of the past, several other specific organizational factors could go a long way towards improving the way in which the public service should reposition itself. This is necessary if inroads are to be made into effecting positive changes in the lives of the billions across the continent.

B. Microlevel: key organizational and individual drivers of change for a development-oriented public service

1. Importance of understanding public service culture and morale

23. There is a realization that the "traditional model of organization and delivery of public services, based on the principles of bureaucratic hierarchy, planning and centralization, direct control and self-sufficiency, is apparently being replaced by a market-based public service management or enterprise culture".[21] However, if the above were accepted, it may be pertinent to augment that with a localized understanding of the prevalent organizational and management cultures in African public services.

24. Is there an adequate understanding of the cultures in Africa's public services, and how they drive performance? Ivor Chipkin argues that public sector performance "is heavily influenced by the people that staff its mix of departments and agencies, the institutional cultures that emerge and the societies that they ostensibly rule or serve".[22] Therefore, a focus on the culture during reform rather than just on the "hardware in the public services and government operations" is necessary.[2] Literature on organizational culture abounds, with much of the bias towards studies on the private sector. But much of the literature can be instructive for the public sector, while not downplaying the complexities of public service and delivery. Understanding the culture is critical to understanding what goes on in organizations, how to run them and how to improve them.[23] K. K. Dale states that when looking through a psychological lens, organizational culture can be sized up as the personality of the organization, which includes its shared values, beliefs, practices, socialization processes, and acceptable behaviours.[24] Organizational culture assessment and management is a necessary part of organizational improvements.

25. In the public service, insufficient attention is paid to understanding the current organizational culture and to moving it in a direction that creates a working environment that inspires, engages and motivates public servants. As Richard Barrett points out, the biggest challenge facing organizations is how to build a

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[21] Economic Commission for Africa, "Public sector management reforms in Africa: lessons learned" (Addis Ababa, 2003); available from www.rrojasdatabank.info/newpmafrica03.pdf.

[22] Ivor Chipkin, "Histories and cultures of the public service in South Africa", Public Affairs Research Institute.

[23] E. Schein, "Organizational culture and leadership: a dynamic view", *Human Resource Management*, vol. 24, No. 3 (Autumn, 1985).

[24] K. K. Dale, "Perceptions of organizational culture of a multi-campus community college district: mixed methods in concert", PhD dissertation (unpublished), Colorado State University, 2012.

culture that encourages the highest levels of employee creativity and productivity. The answer to this lies in understanding employee motivation.[25] Such an understanding will ensure that public servants are invigorated and are motivated to deliver on the vision. Moreover, a working environment that supports the well-being of the employee will result in reduced absenteeism, better quality work and improved relationships with co-workers. However, in his critique on the new public management concept, the President of the Lebanese American University, J. Jabbra, cautioned against viewing comparisons with the private sector where public servants are now managers who must produce precise and measurable results in a clinical setting devoid of compassion and care rather than as servants of the citizenry who have to find innovative ways to work with imprecise ideals in the form of policies handed down to them by their political executives.[12] However, even the private sector has moved some way towards recognizing that it is important to look after the well-being of the employee, in order to get increased productivity.

2. Importance of leadership

26. "Leadership, leadership and again more leadership" is a mantra that holds true for the tone, culture and professionalism of the public service. Turkia Ould Daddah argues that there cannot be a professional public service without the affirmation of "resolute and consistent political will".[8] Political leadership is necessary to ensure a climate conducive to the development of professionalism in the public service.

27. A values-based leadership sets the tone for a working environment that nurtures participation, innovation and performance. Africa's leaders must be grounded in the consciousness of the common good and must have a vision that resonates with their people. The sustainable development goals, contextualized nationally, have the potential to inspire both the public and public servants to aspire to their attainment, provided they believe, through the actions of those who lead, that the intent is honest and for the common good.

28. However, a grounded, culturally aware and systemic understanding of the state of leadership across the continent is critical if, first, the roots of African leadership are understood, and, second, a grounded understanding is used to inform an adept and relevant response to improvements in leadership. Addressing public sector reform for improvements in administration and governance in Africa requires a concerted effort that should include reforms aimed at the control of corruption and greater transparency and accountability.

29. Likewise, Turkia Ould Daddah indicates that a lack of professionalism among senior public servants will have severe consequences for sustainable development.[8] Administrative senior leadership that interfaces with public servants on a daily basis needs to build the right environment to get the best out of public servants, which should include a values-based culture, underpinned by selflessness; participation; collaboration; diversity; learning and innovation; community and society contributions; and vision. Self-interest without a public "servant mentality" impedes progress and will undermine sustainable development.

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[25] R. Barrett, *Liberating the Corporate Soul: Building a Visionary Organization* (Woburn, Massachusetts, Butterworth-Heinemann, 1998).

30. This does not detract from the view that when individuals join the public service, they have a special duty to be fair and impartial in their dealings with the public.[8] Impartiality, neutrality, transparency, accountability and responsiveness are inherent to their job descriptions. Remuneration does play an important part in motivation and job security, and it acts as a guarantee of neutrality. However, Ivor Chipkin points out that while there is much focus on incentives aligned with performance management systems, these do not necessarily account for observed variation in effectiveness.[22]

31. Deliberately investing in building the right environment and borrowing characteristics from other sectors in society will not erode the commitment to the common good by public servants but rather enhance their awareness of the public administration ecosystem as it interfaces with society and the immense responsibility they have to play in that system. The remuneration and rewards debate will neither erode the common good nor put the personal interest of the public servant above the common good. It only focuses on one aspect of what is needed to create a conducive environment that motivates.

32. Leadership in both the political and administrative spheres of public service is regarded as critical and has led to many calling for a reshaping of values[26] and calling for commitments to be assessed against metrics for success, thereby supporting accountability.[14]

3. A people-centred agenda must be at the heart of sustainable development

33. The Goals succeeded in placing people at the centre of the development agenda (see A/68/202). P. S. Omoyefa states that reform goes beyond government administration machinery and that, in order to achieve a meaningful public sector reform, both the private sector and the civil populace have to be embedded in it. Therefore, inclusiveness and a bottom-up approach with broad national participation are non-negotiable for the success of the sustainable agenda. This therefore requires astute public servants who are responsive, understand the policy developing cycle, promote participation, are strong on dialogue and can effectively manage public/private partnerships. Public servants themselves need to be engaged and feel part of the society to whose needs they are responding. A disengaged public servant will respond in an uninterested and uncaring manner, showing little empathy to the plight of the poor and not understanding the need to develop pro-poor policies.

34. Encouraging full participation has not been a strong point; the gender issue is a telling example. Gender inequality is a major challenge for achieving sustainable development, and serious injustices against women persist,[18] including gender-based violence; the unequal distribution of wealth; and the wide gender gap in participation and decision-making at all levels.[27] If the public service is the microcosm of the society it serves, it requires the necessary capacity and training of public servants in diversity and dialogue in order to understand and manage the full

[26] Tag Elsir Mahgoub Ali, State Minister of Labour and Administrative Reform, the Sudan, "The role of public sector leadership in fostering socio-economic and political development in Africa", seminar on public sector leadership capacity development for good governance in Africa, Kampala, 2004.

[27] Sithabiso Gandure, "Sustainable development goals: a southern Africa perspective", paper presented at the Africa Regional Consultative Meeting on the Sustainable Development Goals, Addis Ababa (2013).

participation of that group. It cannot be expected that the challenges will automatically resonate with them and that, in turn, they will respond with the necessary skills. The persistent view that public servants are all knowing and must respond accordingly creates many of the service delivery breakpoints and calls for serious rethinking on how public servants are orientated to certain aspects of their roles. The view that they should know better only further disenchants and demotivates them since, in many cases, they are called upon to perform without having the requisite training and orientation.

4. Reposition the human resources function in order to deliver on the employee agenda

35. Human capital is the predominant determinant of organizational success.[28] If people accept that view, as the present paper does, the functionaries who facilitate the people agenda and provide strategic advice to managers and leaders within the public service in terms of how best to manage their people, will need to have the necessary skills, competence and space at the strategic table to influence the importance of such a focus.

36. When the current human resources functions/units within public service are assessed, the focus is on transactional activities rather than on the transformational and organizational development interventions that focus on building a motivated workforce. Human resources is seen as a core element of organizational planning and is a core business function for transactional matters. Very few public services in Africa focus on the strategic value of human resources to an organization, and miss out on the opportunity of using that employee cadre to assist managers in creating better informed and engaged employees, enticed by the public service employment brand, with levels of technology and automation to deliver quality service at lower costs. The human resources function is also not equipped to provide a competitive advantage in the emerging talent-centric environment. Either by design or default, the human resources function in the public service seems least equipped to support the emotional well-being of a workforce required to deliver in a complex environment with high pressures and high standards. It was therefore opportune to launch the Africa Human Resource Managers' Network during the capacity-building workshop of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs held in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, on 27 February 2009. Its primary objective was to enhance the capacity of human resources managers in the public service in Africa and, in so doing, to reposition and strengthen the role of the human resources practitioner. The constitution of the Network recognizes "the need for the development of competent and professional human resource managers in Africa's public sector to support the development of knowledge, know-how and skills, networks and attitudes to personnel in the public sector through whom services are planned and delivered, critical innovations conceived and realized and needed reforms carried out for rapid economic and social development of the African continent". It sets out to promote, improve and strengthen excellence, integrity and professional standards in the practice of human resources management in the public sector in Africa.

[28] Public Service Commission of Canada, "Emerging trends affecting the Public Service Commission and the Public Service Employment Act", a Public Policy Forum Research Paper (September 2009).

37. The influence of the human resources function must be appreciably increased at the strategic and decision-making table, and the metrics and measures of the strategic value of the function must be developed if it is to be positioned to facilitate the engagement and motivation of public servants to deliver on the sustainable development agenda.

IV. Conclusion

Consideration for invigorating public servants for a post-2015 development agenda

38. After many decades of public sector reforms across the African continent, several lessons have been learned, which, if actively considered, can provide useful in the policy to shape Africa's post-2015 development agenda. It is crucial to know what works and what does not, especially given the tremendous effort and resources allocated to reforms.[21] The present paper has therefore looked at the impact of reform change on the public service in Africa, and the resulting challenges and issues facing the professionalism of the public service, and its ethos, suggesting that the limited focus on the organizational culture of the public service and its institutions has contributed to the failures of the reform. It draws lessons from the reform periods and Millennium Development Goals to understand what will contribute to a better ethos, and positive culture and morale among public servants for sustainable development in Africa, and argues that the lessons provide opportunities to strengthen professionalism and motivation among public servants in the context of sustainable development.

39. Good governance, as a paradigm for effective public service delivery, resonates strongly across many African public service regimes. However, good governance alone is but an approach to doing something in the right way. Such macrolevel lessons on their own may not prove (and, indeed, have not proved) to be sufficient to entrench a strong ethos of performance and accountability in how public servants approach improvements to performance. The lessons learned at the microlevel or institutional nature of the public service organization need restating. How well is the culture of the public service understood in Africa and, using that understanding, how can experiences gained be built upon to reaffirm the need for making sweeping changes to the institutional cultures and organizational practices within Africa's public services? P. S. Omoyefa argues that any meaningful public sector reform goes beyond the government administration machinery. While much has been written about institutional change from within the public service organization, hard work is still required to implement the lessons learned in effecting improvements to the approaches by political and senior administrative leadership, in professionalizing the public service and in embedding public sector management within local and organizational cultural values.

40. In order to effect a behavioural and mindset change among public servants a concomitant focus is required to rally support among them to always do the right thing. Notwithstanding, good governance can ensure sustainable development. However, it needs to move beyond commitments in policies, practices and institutions to demonstrated practice if it is to put the citizen at the centre and to regain the trust of the public. This therefore requires the type of quality leadership at the political and administrative senior level that is committed to fighting corruption, promoting accountability and transparency and upholding the rule of law.

41. At the heart of the argument is the consideration of whether public services understand the culture of their public service and how to embed values and drive performance. It borrows from private sector literature, contending that understanding what goes on in an organization is critical in determining how to run it and, more importantly, how to improve it. In the area of public service, attention is not sufficiently paid to understanding organizational culture and how to create an enabling working environment that inspires, engages and motivates public servants to deliver on the vision.

42. The bedrock behind the repositioning and reorientation of the public service must be a values-based leadership culture, with the administrative leadership building the right environment to get the best out of public servants. That environment must be values-based and underpinned by selflessness, participation, collaboration, diversity, learning and innovation, community and society contributions, and vision. Investing in the right environment will enhance the commitment to the common good and make the public service an employer of choice. In turn, public servants must understand that in joining the public service they have a special duty to uphold the following values that are inherent in their job descriptions: impartiality, neutrality, transparency, accountability and responsiveness. Likewise, a people-centred sustainable development agenda requires astute public servants who are responsive, understand the inclusive policy development cycle, promote participation, are strong on dialogue and involve all actors. In order to successfully integrate this, public servants themselves need to be engaged and feel part of society. The result otherwise will be a disengaged public servant who responds in an uninterested and uncaring manner.

43. This orientation will require the human resources function to facilitate the employee agenda in the public service. In order to successfully do this the influence and strategic value of the function needs to be reassessed. It must be elevated from being just a transactional driver to becoming a transformational focus with the necessary organizational development interventions to transform the culture that builds passionate, engaged and invigorated public servants to deliver on the sustainable development agenda.

44. Ultimately, public service culture must be based on strong values, and the expressions of those values must be within the context of good governance and the rule of law, guided by solid, committed leadership. Without that, the public service will not be connected to its citizens and will not be able to deliver on the sustainable development agenda. As such, there will be retarded progress on completing the Millennium Development Goals and on successfully delivering on the post-2015 agenda.